

Exploring Meaning and Mood in Poetry

DIRECTIONS: Read the poem silently and then read it aloud. Visualize the word pictures created by the author. Think: What do I see, hear, and feel? Look for author's techniques like the use of rhythm, rhyme, repetition, creative use of language, and arrangement of words on a page. In your journal, respond to the following: In your own words, tell what the poem is about. What feelings do you have? What techniques create the mood? Copy parts of the poem you liked the best and tell why.

BATS

By Randall Jarrell

A bat is born
Naked and blind and pale.
His mother makes a pocket of her tail
And catches him. He clings to her long fur
By his thumbs and toes and teeth.
And then the mother dances through the night
Doubling and looping, soaring, and somersaulting-
Her baby hangs on underneath.
All night, in happiness, she hunts and flies.
Her high sharp cries
Like shining needlepoints of sound
Go out into the night and, echoing back,
Tell her what they have touched.
She hears how fat it is, how big it is,
Which way it's going
She lives by hearing.
The mother eats the moths and gnats she catches
In full flight; in full flight
The mother drinks the water of the pond
She skims across. Her baby hangs on tight.
Her baby drinks the milk she makes him
In moonlight or starlight, in mid-air.
Their single shadow, printed on the moon
Or fluttering across the stars,
Whirls on all night; at daybreak
The tired mother flaps home to her rafter.
The others all are there.
They hang themselves up by their toes,
They wrap themselves in their brown wings.
Bunched upside down, they sleep in air.
Their sharp ears, their sharp teeth, their
 quick sharp faces
Are dull and slow and mild
All the bright day, as the mother sleeps,
She folds her wings about her sleeping child.